

The Opera-Bouffe Republics

By BROUGHTON BRANDENBURG

WHILE it may be tragedy in the particular case, it is broadly ludicrous in the ensemble, this system of government by revolution with which the Latin-American Republics have been afflicted for a century. The whole world has long been looking on with amusement at the efforts of the former colonies of Spain, France, and Portugal to govern themselves, and though some of them have shown an unwonted stability in the past twenty years, others that were just as stable forty years ago continue to bubble in disorder like so many volcanoes of intermittent periods of activity.

The old Spanish doctors were the first to practise extensively the doctrine of blood-letting for all diseases, and with its decadence they seem to have passed on the method to colonial political uses, until the cure for all national ailments south of Florida appears to be phlebotomy—and again phlebotomy.

The truly laughable aspect of the situation is not discovered until one delves into the study of it. In history we read of General This invading a neighboring country opposed by the forces of President That and fighting the terrific battle of Something Else, in which the insurgents were defeated and annihilated. The thing that happened half a century ago reoccurs every year; we see just such despatches in the newspapers, and are greatly impressed—when the truth is that the whole affair has been about the size of a good riot at Coney Island in its heyday.

For example, consider one of the four revolutions of the past twelve months, the overthrowing of President Morales of Santo Domingo and the establishment of President Caceres, an affair which was followed closely by every informed person in the United States and viewed with much concern because of our peculiar diplomatic-protectoral relations with the Morales Government under the now famous *modus vivendi*.

When All the Generals Died

HERE is an account of the battle of Puerto Plata January 2, 3, 4, the most important engagement, really the crisis, of the whole revolution affecting the political welfare of a nation of a million people. General Jesus Maria Cespedes, the Caceres leader and the victor, had barely three hundred men, "one division commanded by General Vanegas"; while General Demetrio Rodriguez, the Morales partizan, had three hundred, and about one hundred men and boys picked up along the road as the Morales followers marched from Maimon to Puerto Plata. He was assisted in the arduous duties of commanding this vast army by Generals Mimi, Abrero, and Vanderhoss. The number of colonels would sound like exaggeration. The official report speaks eloquently of the artillery in the battle. This consisted of one antiquated rapid-fire gun, hauled out of the fort into Calle Separation and used to clear the street until it jammed in the hands of its ignorant gunner.

All the "generals" were killed except the hero Cespedes; but there was not much other damage done, save that the town was salted with bullets, and even to-day when some merchant asks for last December's letter-file he is likely to find a steel-jacketed missile in the middle pages. At least every four privates had an officer to keep them from running away or shooting with their eyes shut, and to make up for "the lost brigade and division commanders" several new generals were breveted on the spot. The fighting lasted as long as at Gettysburg, and the result was as significant to Santo Domingo proportionately; but anyone of the classes that participate in the annual cannon rush at Princeton could have chased the entire outfit into the hills.

Before particularizing on some of the pyrotechnic histories of various of the little Republics, it may be well to give some general figures. Taking a sample eight of the twenty countries that have or have had an independent existence, begun on the average between 1815 and 1825, when Spain lost her hold on the mass of her colonial possessions, it is found that Peru, Haiti, Brazil, Santo Domingo, Uruguay, Venezuela, Paraguay, Ecuador, and Colombia have had a total of seven hundred and twenty-seven years of national life, with an aggregate of rulers of all sorts numbering one hundred and seventy-nine, of which amazing total two were Emperors, three were Kings, and nine were acknowl-

edged Dictators ruling with an iron hand for a total of one hundred and sixty-eight years. The average presidential constitutional term being five years in all the States, a bit of division shows that one hundred and fifty-five Presidents who became such by election or force of arms averaged only something over three years each.

This makes no account of the numerous self-styled presidents and dictators, a full listing of whom would be interesting. Venezuela and Ecuador have had as many as four each at one time. To bring

about these irregularities in the political successions, assassinations, elections, *coups d'état*, new constitutions, and, last but not most important, revolutions, have been the means. In the eight States named there has been a total of one hundred and sixty-one revolutions and hundreds of plots and insurrections nipped in the bud after they had assumed definite form. Dozens every year get no further than the first quarrel among the conspirators.

How a Revolution Begins

THE genesis of a revolution is peculiar. It has some features akin to a municipal-reform movement in the United States. The party leaders that are out of power first forgather and find a reason for attacking the party that is in control; then the "good citizen" element is induced to back the revolutionary movement, and some wealthy men or set of men are persuaded to advance the necessary cash. Latterly, since foreign capital is being invested by millions in South and Central America, some foreign concern is the financial support of the plan; for it is an axiom that the best way to get a concession or to protect one that you already have is to put your own President in charge of all concessions. Next, if the generals who control the army cannot be won over to the cause, it is necessary to raise a new army and to smuggle arms to some point on the coast from which they can be safely got into the mountain valleys, where it is possible to mobilize a large force without news of it reaching the capital. Nearly every country has one or two points from which its revolutions endeavor to start. Before Panama became a republic, Colon, Barranquilla, and the Antioquia district could be looked to for disturbances with great regularity.

The intriguing politician who has been the chief engineer of the plot almost without exception is eliminated from the chances for the presidency as soon as the revolution is well under way, and the General who wins the battles becomes the power in the land.

A new constitution is frequently an early result of the fresh régime, and under it Congress "elects" the provisional President to be the constitutional President. If the provisional government waited until the election day under the former constitution another revolution might have interfered before that. Peru had six constitutions from 1828 to 1860.

If the new President is a strong man and a just man, and therefore holds the opposition in check and satisfies the patriotic-citizen element, he may serve out his full term, if he is lucky. It may be necessary then to change the constitution to allow him to serve another term, and this will nearly always provoke trouble. If he is a strong man he will override all opposition and stay in power till he makes some mistake or grows weak and old. He is thus practically a dictator, though he may not declare himself as such.

Some of the Well-Known Rulers

GUZMAN Blanco was a fine type of the dictator who was better at making enemies than friends. Boyer, who succeeded Petion in Haiti after Cristophe's suicide 1820, and ruled for twenty-five years, not only in his own country, but in conquered Santo Domingo as well; Dom Pedro, who held power in Brazil for forty-six years; Rosas of Argentina, who ruled Uruguay for the ten years preceding 1852, when he was driven to England; Francia, who was elected perpetual dictator in Paraguay and was the supreme power till 1840, when he died; General Porfirio Diaz, who with one brief interruption has been Mexico's president for thirty years; President Cipriano Castro of Venezuela, and President Reyes of Colombia, both entering on the middle periods of what promise to be long rules;—these men are excellent examples of what a strong man can do with a volatile people.

Personal ambition of some man or some set of men is the mainspring of each movement of a

revolutionary nature, and venality in office is usually the cause of speedy downfalls. There is, of course, something in the climate which provokes periodical eruptions, and I have noticed, too, in considering the personal history of a number of men who have figured prominently, a strong disinclination to earn a living by working for it. But, after all, the sudden outbreaks of revolution would not be possible, if it was not for the industrial organization of the countries that are most

troubled. The men of wealth, education, or prominence who become naturally the leaders are grounded on landed estates.

Mining and agriculture are the great industries, and the latter always has been by far the most important. The red, white, and half-breed natives labor on the plantations owned by these men who have time to dabble in politics or in the mines, which are mostly controlled by foreign capital. When a *haciendado*, or planter, casts in his lot with the revolutionists, he marshals these men from his plantations, and speedily has an army at agricultural laborer's wages with long credit. That is why raising an army is so easy: merely enlist enough planters to serve as generals in the revolution, and cabinet ministers, governors of provinces, etc., after the war is over, and the trick is done.

Here is where the comedy ceases and the tragedy begins. The rank and file of the army are made up of men who have as a rule little idea of the cause for which they tramp and starve in the mountains. They struggle through thickets and swamps only to face an impersonal enemy merely because their master has bidden them do so. Often the ablest men physically are left behind on the plantations, and the old men and boys are enlisted. I have seen thin, wistful-faced lads of fourteen and fifteen staggering along on frightful marches under the weight of heavy old-fashioned rifles, sick from exposure and weak from lack of food, while the clothing they wore was only a handful of tattered cotton rags.

Some Countries Emerging

MEXICO, Paraguay, Uruguay, Brazil, Chile, and Argentina seem to have almost emerged from the state of instability in government which was once their curse. In no one of them is the danger entirely passed. This very year a revolution was started in Uruguay that if it had been given twenty-four hours more time would have been serious. When Porfirio Diaz dies Mexico will waver in the straight path, and the most patriotic of her citizens are constantly on guard; for "Don Porfirio is seventy-six," they tell each other daily. Outside influences combined with superior agricultural and climatic conditions are responsible for the betterment in the countries named. American capital has made Mexico, and it was American silver dollars that gave her her great president.

The man to whom they belonged died after an extremely useful and eventful life, last October in Hamburg, while on an important mission for an American military concern, and thousands of his friends have not even heard of his end. He was Colonel Julius G. Tucker, formerly of Stuart's Cavalry, the youngest Confederate Colonel, later United States Commissioner on the Rio Grande, and later American Consul-General at Martinique. While in his twenty troubled years of service on the frontier at Brownsville, Texas, one day a ragged, dusty, dirty, and almost exhausted man made his way to the ranch and asked for shelter and food. He said that he had fled hundreds of miles through the wild country across the border, followed by soldiers who had defeated his little revolutionary band. He had not a dollar. For months Tucker sheltered him, and then with mule-loads of Tucker's money he set out for New Orleans, bought arms, organized an expedition, and a few months later marched into the city of Mexico as the patriot conqueror of his country's foes, General Porfirio Diaz.

A glance at some of the Republics with turbulent records discloses some queer things. In Haiti, for instance, after Boyer the Dictator was driven out, there were ten Presidents before Salomon, another Dictator, arose; Riviere was overthrown, Guerries died mysteriously, Pierrot was forced out, Riche was assassinated, Soulongue was overthrown, Geffard was overthrown, Salnave was overthrown and shot, Dominique was overthrown, Canal was overthrown, and Sarget, who followed Salnave, was

